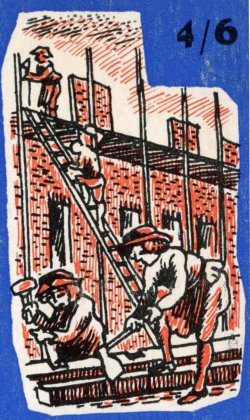

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Discovering FOLKLORE IN INDUSTRY

Alan Smith

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WHAT FOLKLORE IS ABOUT

There is a widespread but quite unfounded belief that folklore can only be found in the countryside and that with the death of each hamlet's last smockwearing gaffer the stock of folklore is irretrievably diminished. Nothing could be further from the truth. The subject matter of folklore comprises the (usually unwritten) beliefs and customs passed on to us from our ancestors and older contemporaries. There can be—and is—folklore about anything. It is what the ordinary person believes and what he does because he so believes. A good deal of our behaviour is regulated by our belief in the clergyman's religion, the doctor's science and the magistrate's law but a good deal is also regulated by what we were taught by or picked up from our parents and grandparents or any other members of previous generations. Moreover, new customs and new beliefs, new superstitions (a word that literally means 'leftovers') are coming into existence every day. Some of these will survive to become the folklore and foundation of the folkways of tomorrow. There is no reason at all why we should not be able to discover folklore in industry subject only to two conditions: firstly that the group of people involved should be a fairly stable one, or folklore can never take root and secondly that it should have continued in existence for some considerable time or the folklore will never grow. Computer operators can hardly be expected to have a folklore. Printers, however, have some. Blacksmiths, traditionally the first of trades because they make the tools for all the others, have a very great deal of it. Here then is an introduction to the folklore of the mine and mill and workshop, of the blacksmith, the printer and the shipwright—of modern men in the industrial age—not of the dwindling ranks of the shepherds and the ploughmen—but of the ordinary man of this our own century.

THE PATTERN OF FOLKLORE

Collectors of folklore, as of any other collectable item, are often attracted by the oddity and by the strangeness of their finds. To those however who hold the beliefs in question or who carry out the custom, there is nothing strange about them at all. It is just common knowledge, common sense and 'what everybody always does' on the occasion in question. There is however much rhyme and reason about folklore that reconciles the two

points of view. The particular *form* of the belief or custom may well be odd or striking to the outside observer but the *instincts* on which it is based—the whole point of the thing—are common to all men. In most folklore and custom we can see the following regular tendencies in action. Firstly, the instinctive urge to mark with ceremony changes of season, the turning points of the community's calendar. In individual terms this instinct builds custom around the time of birth, of coming of age, of marriage or of death. Secondly, there is the deep-rooted feeling that newly begun or newly completed enterprises should be protected against possible uncanny attack by the mobilised goodwill of the group. Drinking healths and wishing luck are the simplest expressions of this instinct. Thirdly, there is the belief that the likely future may be known and its possibilities either encouraged or guarded against. This knowledge may be acquired either by positive divination or by taking note of chance good or bad omens. In such simple terms as these most folklore may be explained. Irrational these instincts may be but they certainly still exist and are as powerful today as they ever were. Only the forms of expression change, the underlying beliefs endure.

SHIPS AND SEAFARERS

All the trades connected with the sea have a great deal of folklore attached to them. During the final caulking of a wooden ship a Yorkshire shipwright might still claim a 'caulking kiss' from any passing girl or, at his discretion, a shilling instead to buy mythical 'oil for the riming iron so it goes into the seam more easily'. When a ship's masts were stepped tradition advised the placing of a gold coin under each of them, a custom going back to Roman times. In Great Britain a sovereign was the natural choice. The masts of the Sail Training Association schooner *Sir Winston Churchill* however, were stepped onto Churchill crowns. Four days later, in a great wind, the masts snapped off some twenty feet from the deck. It is chance disasters of this sort that call to mind the old traditions and impress upon some people that it is wisest to respect them 'just in case'.

The launching of a great ship is a splendid spectacle and one saturated with tradition. The tenseness of the crowds, the blessing, the 'sacrifice' of champagne against the bows and the hush before the cheer as the ship slowly moves away, all add up to a sense of occasion scarcely to be paralleled elsewhere. Any hitch at this stage is a bad omen long remembered. Certainly one of the most difficult ships to launch was an ill fated one. This

was Brunel's *Great Eastern* launched at Millwall in 1858. So vast it had to enter the water sideways, it was inched down the slipways by steam presses but also restrained by mighty chains to prevent a catastrophic roll into the Thames. Although an engineering marvel the ship was an economic disaster being too large for any cargo or passenger route that existed at the time. This is the perfectly reasonable explanation of her unsatisfactory career, an unplanned switch to cable laying and a sad end (before her breaking up in 1890) as a kind of floating hoarding. She was considered a 'hoodoo' ship and popular opinion ascribed her commercial failure to the ghosts of a rivetter and his boy said to have been accidentally sealed in when the ship's double hull was completed. Although this hull was often entered and examined during the *Great Eastern's* unfortunate career no skeletons were ever found but the story of the lost pair and their strange revenge has persisted and still crops up whenever the *Great Eastern* is mentioned.

Friday is still considered an unlucky day by sailors and ships are not normally launched, nor do they start a voyage on that day. Sailors are known to have had a prejudice against having clergymen on board. Bad weather was likely to result! Corpses were also unwelcome but, if carried at all, should lie athwart the vessel, not along it and leave the ship first, before the crew did. A ship's bell ringing without human agency was a sign of disaster. It was believed that the bell always rang as a ship sank. Rats were believed to abandon not merely a sinking ship which would not be an unlikely situation but also a ship that was destined to sink. It is a landsman's belief that a captain is under some obligation to go down with his ship. The old time sailor or fisherman was (and perhaps still is) often unable to swim thinking that to be able to do so would only mean prolonging the awful wait before inevitable death by drowning. The belief still survives that those destined to drown will inevitably do so and once the train of events has been set in motion it should not be interrupted lest another victim be taken instead. A capsized boat in which the crew had all been drowned might still be burnt rather than reused. It is a great principle of folk belief that bad luck is contagious. Tradition dies hard in the sailors' world and there were many who were not at all surprised when, in the summer of 1959, the *Calpean Star* sailing from South Georgia to Oslo was delayed, first by strikes and then by engine trouble. She was attempting to deliver an albatross, traditional bird of ill omen, to a German zoo. Said Captain Phillip Everett-Price " . . . I had courage in bringing the damn thing aboard." It is perhaps not surprising that the deep sea sailor or fisherman should have a wealth of custom and folklore. He belongs to a

small and isolated floating world at the mercy of incalculable forces and one in which experience is still often the safest guide. All the conditions exist in which the beliefs of one generation can be passed on to and be accepted by another.

A well established sailors' custom likely to be encountered by those taking holiday cruises is the 'Crossing the Line' ceremony. When the ship crosses the equator, 'King Neptune' and his court of Tritons and mermaids clamber aboard to initiate all those who have never before 'crossed the line'. The initiation takes the form of seating the candidate on a plank placed across a tub of water, pretending to shave him and then tipping him backwards for an unexpected ducking. The custom today is an entirely good humoured one—for physically fit volunteers only—but this was not always the case in days gone by when the horseplay was considerably rougher. On the old sailing ships the lathering was done with tar brushes and bilge water and the 'shaving' with rusty iron hoops! Of course, as is so often the case with this type of custom, one could always pay to be let off. The custom was not restricted to the equator but might be carried out when passing any prominent mark or entering any 'new' sea area. A ship's log of 1712 briefly notes, "June 7th. We duckt those men that want willing to pay for crossing the tropick."

Fishermen share much of the lore of the world-roving sailor. They have the same feeling about Fridays and will avoid beginning work with a new boat or starting a new fishing then. The fisherman mindful of his community traditions might well turn back if he met a woman while going down to the boats and it would be incumbent upon the fisherwomen to keep out of the way then. To see a cross eyed woman or worse still a nun would have been a sure portent of disaster. Once on board other taboos are observed. Certain words must never be mentioned and the things themselves must be referred to by another name. At Staithes, pig was the forbidden word, at Hull, rabbits. In Cornwall it was church or minister. Shetland fishermen used an entirely different vocabulary of Norse origin for everything on or seen from the boat. As do all sailors, fishermen believe in the power of the caul, the membraneous 'veil' found on the heads of some children at birth, as a powerful protective against drowning. Cauls still change hands at good prices in London's dockland even today.

In most established fishing communities the beginning of the season is marked with some ceremony, usually religious in character for it is a long-standing policy of the church to adopt and 'christianise' pagan survivals or even to offer substitute rites. At Norham on Tweed, on the Scottish border, a service of blessing is held for the start of the salmon fishing season,

traditionally February 14th. The service begins at 11.45 p.m. and the first boat goes off at midnight. The service in its present form is perhaps only some seventy or eighty years old. At Great Yarmouth the nets were blessed on the first Sunday in October. At Rogation-tide (the Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday before Ascension Day) services are or were held at North Shields (on the fish quay and on the river itself), at Cullercoats, at Hastings and at Mudeford near Christchurch. Perhaps the most striking of these ceremonies uniting the pagan and the Christian is the Abbotsbury (Dorset) Garland ceremony. The local mackerel season began on May 13th, and a blessing was sought by carrying garlands out to sea on the fishing boats. In earlier times they were cast into the sea as offerings. Now they are brought back and laid up in the parish church. The custom lapsed but was seen again in the 1960's. It is hard for us to think of Brighton as a fishing port but it was once (as indeed was urban Barking) and the fishermen there had their own traditional prayer or charm for ensuring a good mackerel season. As the boats set off bread and cheese was given to the children on the beach. As the nets slipped into the sea, the skipper ordered 'Hats off' and prayed for a blessing, the men responding with the following words, each man having his own line.

Watch barrel watch, mackerel for to catch.
White may they be like blossom on a tree.
Some by the head
Some by the tail
God send us good mackerel may never fail.
Some by the nose
Some by the fin
God send as many as we can lift in.

The fishermen's name for the ceremony was 'Bending in' perhaps, it has been suggested, a corruption of 'Benediction' in which case it would seem probable that some pagan ceremony was taken over and christianised into something the church could accept, which in its own turn decayed into something with a meaningless name. The custom has long ago lapsed. At Brighton and Hastings it was traditionally said that 'The herrings come to see the bonfire on Guy Fawkes Day' an interesting example of the linking of different things in the popular mind. The bonfire custom is still strong in the region (the Lewes celebration being especially notable) and the first herring were commonly caught on November 5th. Folkestone fishermen paid for a Christmas Eve celebration by the sale of eight specially selected whiting from each boat. They were unaccountably called Rumbald Fish. Scots fisherman shared the usages of their southern fellows, distributing bread and cheese before the first

sailing for example, but also had customs of their own such as scattering barley over a newly launched boat. At Buckie (Banffshire) when herring catches were poor a strange luck-bringing ceremony was carried out in which a cooper was dressed in a shirt covered in burrs and carried in procession through the town. (There is another Burry Man custom at Queensferry, Midlothian but it has no association with fishermen.) The prevalence of Brethrenism among the Scottish herring fishers has strongly confirmed their national disinclination to fish on a Sunday. Some Devon fishermen, perhaps for the same reason were noted for never fishing on Good Friday.

Men who follow the sea seem to have a greater wealth of folklore and superstition than those of any other calling and if one looks across the seas around Britain to neighbouring countries one finds an even greater quantity much of which is known to British seafarers. The French think a priest particularly unlucky, perhaps from his association with deaths, but perhaps also because in French folklore the priest was sometimes credited with powers over the weather. This made him a very awkward person to deal with indeed and one perhaps best avoided entirely. The dislike of nuns near the boats is extended to any old maid, to dressmakers and even to tailors. Other general sea superstitions are a dislike of lawyers sometimes called 'landsharks', a belief that it is unlucky to play cards on board ship, the belief that winds can be 'whistled for' by the sympathetic magic of blowing, and the feeling that to lose a swab or bucket overboard is a very bad omen indeed. Sometimes a shoe is thrown after a departing boat for good luck. It is lucky also to carry a naturally holed stone tied to the bow. A piece of coal washed up from the sea is sometimes carried by sailors for luck. A boat at sea should never be pointed at with a finger but only with the whole hand. A boat should never be pulled out stern first and, above all, the catch should not be enquired about!

What is recorded in good faith as superstition or folklore can however often be given quite a different explanation. For example, 'Never sit on an upturned bucket', some Folkestone divers were reported as saying "It will push the bottom out of a boat." "They'd be silly if they did", a Yorkshire fisherman retorted on hearing this, "They'd most likely cut their suits". Few of us have much sympathy for other people's superstitions. Here is a final injunction from an old fisherman to a younger that bids us respect our means of livelihood. "Curse anything you like, but not the keel and gear and never spit upon the net."

The watermen of the Thames still keep up their annual race for Doggett's Coat and Badge under the supervision of the Fishmongers' Company of London who hold funds for this

purpose. Doggett was an eighteenth century actor who established the race in 1716 to honour the newly enthroned Hanoverian dynasty. Six watermen are required to row from London Bridge to Chelsea on August 1st, or as near to that day as possible if the state of the river is unfavourable. The prize, still eagerly competed for, is a brightly coloured coat and a large badge bearing on it the White Horse of Hanover. What was once a rather odd demonstration of political loyalty has now come to be a well established part of the tradition of London's waterside community.

MINERS AND QUARRYMEN

Like fishing, mining also brings into being communities with a strong sense of custom and tradition, and the miners are often regarded as a race apart by their neighbours. Fishermen and miners share a belief in the Seven Whistlers, a group of sinister birds whose cries forewarn of disaster. More common are stories of warnings by the ghosts of dead mates or of children. The belief has been recorded that pit accidents are more frequent when beans are in flower. When miners drew lots for their 'cables' (the sections of seam allocated to each man) they would put the cat into the oven for luck or hang up the coal tongs on the mantle shelf. A man going to the first shift who met a woman on the way would turn round and go straight home again. A squinting woman would have been an even worse omen as would a wooden legged man. A miner would never go back into the house if he had forgotten something but would stand at the door until it was brought to him. It was deemed unlucky to change shifts with someone in midweek. One's chosen lot should be adhered to until officially changed.

When disaster struck the pit—and, in the old days especially, it was 'when' rather than 'if'—work would cease for the shift and when the men went back there would sometimes be an effort to put a 'new' man to work in the immediate area of the accident. The underlying idea here would seem to be that some vestige of the fatal ill luck might still be clinging to the workmates of the dead men. On the strictly practical side, a new man might well be less disturbed by the associations of that part of the pit. Although the miner in his tin bath has been regularly featured in films of colliery life there was among the older generation a feeling that washing the back was distinctly weakening and something not to be indulged in too often!

The absenteeism so often complained by managements is

itself something of a tradition, for many miners still cling instinctively to the old pre-industrial work pattern by which a worker had in mind what he considered a suitable wage, and when he reached that figure would simply cease work. When the money was spent work was resumed. It is not philosophy calculated to make for steady production but it does emphasise the fact—or what should be the fact—that we work to live, not live to work!

In the past the miners were very much a separate community but they would on occasion play a part in the life of the neighbouring towns. For example, in Christmas week it used to be the custom of the miners of Llwynymaen near Oswestry to cover boards with clay and set in them lighted candles. These were then carried from house to house in the town as a Christmas greeting, perhaps, it has been suggested, symbolic of 'The Light of the World'.

Traditional sword dancing still survives in the mining districts of the north and seems to have had some special association with the mining trade, but apart from this and the beliefs we have noted above, the community spirit of the miners most shows itself in the lodge meeting, the band practice, whippet racing and the drinking club. The great Durham Miners' Gala is now a tradition in itself. This summer festival, with its holiday atmosphere, processions with historic Trade Union banners, massed brass bands and—when Labour is in power—the presence of the Prime Minister and members of the Cabinet seems at an infinite distance in time from the days when the miners of the North East were a despised race of near-serfs, treated with contempt and regarded as little better than savages.

Other types of mining had their own traditions too. The lead miners of Derbyshire were noted for not working on Good Friday. The tinners of Cornwall would leave work on January 24th, St. Paul's Eve, to shatter a pitcher of water and then spend the rest of the day at the inn. Tradition says this symbolises a protest against the rule that only water should be drunk in the mine but this is unlikely as Cornwall had a number of crockery breaking customs at this time of year with no question of any mining associations. The Shropshire colliers would stop work and demand beer money when the first cuckoo was heard, perhaps a reflection of the belief that whatever you were doing when the first cuckoo was heard calling would be your principal activity for the rest of the year! The link between folklore and drinking is a very close one indeed.

The following extract from an old newspaper shows that quarrymen too shared much of the miners' outlook. "On Thursday (Ascension Day) the Bethesda Slate Quarries were

entirely closed, not, however, out of respect to the religious character of the day, but in deference to a superstition that has lingered for many years among the Penrhyn quarrymen that working on Ascension Day was sure to be attended with a fatality or accident of serious character. Some six years back, the management succeeded in partly overcoming this feeling and several of the men worked, an arrangement which continued about two years. Strange to say there has always been an accident and Ascension Day continues to be an idle day as far as the Penrhyn quarrymen are concerned."

As the industrial revolution progressed there were great improvements in transport and a great increase in bridge building. In the medieval world all bridges were regarded with some awe and many tales were told of the wiles of builders forced to seek the aid of the Devil in order to complete their task but the strange thing is that the modern bridge—even the railway bridge—seems to have attracted folklore to itself. There is for example a strong feeling in some districts that it is unlucky to be under a bridge when a train passes over or to be on it as the train goes under. The belief has also been recorded that it is unlucky to talk while crossing the bridge. There is some evidence that it is becoming customary to throw pennies from the train when one crosses the Forth Bridge! There is indeed nothing, however, modern, that cannot attract some superstition to itself.

BUILDERS AND BLACKSMITHS

The builder's craft is an ancient one with many traditions associated with it. The strange rituals of the Freemasons ultimately derive from those of the builders' guilds of the Middle Ages but to consider these would take us rather far from industry. A great building was a major enterprise and had to be 'insured' against evil influences. Some kind of sacrifice was required and remnants of this belief lasted on into historic times. The mortar of the Tower of London was said to have been mixed with the blood of bulls and old country builders sometimes got blood from the butcher for this same purpose. By accident or design Wren's builders of 1691 sealed a live cat into a cavity under the roof of St. Michael's College Hill in the City of London. Its dried up body was discovered when the church was being repaired after its blitzing in 1944. Suspected animal victims are quite frequently found in or under old buildings. Alcohol is frequently found as a substitute for blood—it has been said that this is the explanation of the champagne used when a ship

is launched—and a building job would often have begun with preliminary social drinking and the pouring of the dregs onto the site. Coins or other objects might be placed under the foundation stone which is itself the focus of much ceremony for its laying officially begins the building. The actual building process bears few traces of tradition apart from the odd fact that builders treat Good Friday as a normal day; this seems to have no traditional explanation but it is simply described as 'the custom of the trade'.

As the building nears completion more celebrations are prepared. Indeed, one such lasted for well over four hundred years! On October 10th, the day of Sherborne Fair, a noisy gang used to parade the streets making as much noise as possible and claiming to be 'Teddy Rowe's band' and Teddy Rowe is said to have been the foreman of the masons who rebuilt the nave of Sherborne Abbey in 1490 after it had been damaged by fire. However, to return to less spectacular building feats, the placing of the first chimney pot on a house would be an occasion for free beer once again and when the job was really complete the 'topping out' ceremony was held. Originally it was a fir tree or birch broom or other green bough that was displayed on top of a newly completed building but in this century a flag—the Union Jack—was more normal. If the contractor did not supply the men with beer a black flag might be flown as the workmen's solemn curse on the enterprise but this was something which rarely if ever happened. In recent years many big firms have revived the 'topping out' custom as a logical counterpart of the foundation stone ceremony. That a work should be 'blessed' at both its beginning and its end is of the very essence of folklore and tradition. How old this still lively custom is we cannot tell but it is certainly medieval. At Shottesbrooke (Berkshire), the story is told that in the fourteenth century the architect fell to his death from the new spire, having climbed there to drink the king's health.

One last thought: an old nursery rhyme begins with the line "Upon Paul's steeple stands a tree." Could this be the last faint memory of the 'topping out' of Old St. Paul's? Folklore is full of such strange survivals. Among the 'inside' trades in building there seems to be little one can dignify with the name of custom though paperhangers will sometimes elaborately sign the wall before hanging the last piece of paper, and plasterers will often sign their completed work in some inconspicuous place.

There is a tradition that when Solomon had completed his great temple the workmen were all given a feast which was disturbed by the arrival of the blacksmiths demanding admission. At first Solomon would not allow them in since they had taken

no part in the work but the blacksmiths maintained that without them no work would have been possible for they made the tools for all the other tradesmen. Solomon conceded the justice of their claim and they were admitted to the festivities. The story is current among the gypsies as well for in the past many of them were metal workers and, as gypsies, no doubt all too familiar with the experience of being barred from the village inn! The blacksmiths' claim has of course a great element of truth in it and their importance was made obvious again in the age of the industrial revolution for it was from the blacksmith—with some help from the millwright and in France the locksmith—that the engineer evolved. The country shoeing smith was and (where he survives) perhaps still is the focus of much strange belief. Some were believed to be able to calm restive horses with a secret word. The water in which they cooled the iron was reputed to have medicinal qualities.

Perhaps the strangest piece of 'smith-lore' is that concerning the 'survival test' for grievously sick babies. The sick child was placed on the anvil and around it stood seven smiths, each one the son and the grandson of a smith. They raised their hammers and shouted as they would when striking the heated iron. If the child showed fear it would survive. If not, then there was no hope at all. Many smiths too had the reputation of blood charmers, that is of being able to stop the flow of blood from a wound by certain words or gestures or even the unspoken wish. Whether in the strictly practical or in the magic sense the smith was undoubtedly a man of power.

The blacksmiths of the shipyards and the workshops were perhaps not such men of mystery but they were still very conscious of themselves as skilled men and something of a race apart. In the eighteenth century the blacksmiths of Bristol would gather at first on Shrove Tuesday but later in the century on Whit Monday and parade through the town. The usual and no doubt sought-for end of this celebration was a grand fight with the combined forces of the coopers, sailors and carpenters. The custom has now lapsed. Blacksmiths, above all trades, refrained from work on Good Friday. To drive a nail on that day would have been the worst of sins, for it must have been a blacksmith, tradition says, who made the nails for the crucifixion. Once again, certain versions of the story make the smith a gypsy and go on to say how, when he learned the evil purpose of the nails that had been ordered, refused to hand over the fourth and last of the set. Ever since then persecutors have hounded the gypsies. One day the nail will be discovered and the gypsies given credit for their good purpose in withholding it.

The blacksmith's traditional mode of celebration was exploding

gunpowder on their anvils. This was often done for weddings but most often on November 23rd, the feast of St. Clement the patron saint of blacksmiths. This old trade custom was brought into the dockyards of Chatham and Woolwich and survived until perhaps the First World War. A robed and greybearded figure represented Old Clem and was chaired round the town while money, for the usual convivial purposes, was collected. At certain points on his route he would make the following speech, "I am the real St. Clement, the first founder of brass, iron and steel from the ore. I have been to Mount Etna, where the god Vulcan first built his forge. I have been through the deserts of Arabia, through Asia, Africa and America, through the city of Pongrove, through the town of Tipmingo and all the northern parts of Scotland. I arrived in London on the twenty-third of November and came down to see how all the gentlemen Vulcans came on there. I find them all hard at work and wish to leave them all well on the twenty-fourth." Old Clem's mate then spoke his traditional words—the appeal.

Come all you Vulcans stout and strong, unto St. Clem we do belong,
I know this house is well prepared with plenty of money and good strong beer
And we must drink before we part, all for to cheer each merry heart.
Come all ye Vulcans strong and stout, unto St. Clem I pray turn out.
For now St. Clem's going round the town, his coach and six goes merrily round. Huzza!

As years went by Old Clem was gradually forgotten and only the collecting remained. At some yards, on November 25th, a man in women's clothes was paraded in similar fashion as St. Catherine but this never attained the same status as the Old Clem custom. St. Clement had, according to tradition, been martyred by being attached to an anchor and drowned and it was the anchor smiths who originally had him as their patron. St. Dunstan was another patron saint for smiths for he it was who held the devil's nose in his tongs and shod his hoof, exacting from the fiend a solemn pledge to keep away from any place where the horseshoe was displayed.

APPRENTICES AND BEGINNERS

A young worker in industry is quite likely to find himself the victim of anything from reasonably good humoured practical jokes to downright cruelty. These practices go on from generation to generation and are established customs in most workshops and factories. They express the hostility of the group to the outsider, even to the newcomer to their own ranks. The newcomer is humiliated in various ways, his ignorance of the group's terminology and usages is brought home to him and perhaps he is put through some frightening, possibly dangerous, ordeal. At length he is accepted into the group and is soon inflicting the same things he suffered himself on a new generation of beginners. The most common of these practices is that of the fool's errand. The new boy is sent with a barrow to collect some massive piece of machinery weighing many tons or perhaps, as among the printers, for some minute piece of type, the common factor being the newcomer's ignorance of the equipment of his trade. Boys are regularly sent for bubbles for the spirit level or even buckets of steam! A generalised example is that of being sent for 'the long stand' or 'the long weight (wait)'. Often a very long time passes before the unfortunate victim realises how he is getting what he was sent for. An example of the foolishly dangerous 'initiation' came to light in the 1960's in Scotland. Apprentices were told to stand against a door to have their height marked on it, the custom being called 'measuring the apprentice'. When the boy stood against the door, someone behind it struck a blow with a sledge hammer at the place they estimated his head to be. In one instance at least this has led to serious injury and a subsequent court case.

When apprenticeship is formally completed there are usually further ceremonies to go through and perhaps the best known of these is that of 'trussing the cooper.' The newly qualified cooper stands in a barrel of his own making and is first of all heated. He then gets down in the barrel and is covered with a mixture of soot, shavings, feathers, treacle, beer. He is rolled round the workshop several times before being taken out and tossed in the air three times. After he has cleaned himself up he is presented with his indentures and is a fully qualified cooper. Trussing is said to have been the practice of the trade for the past five hundred years. The printers have a similar custom called 'banging out'. In this the apprentice is smeared with printers' ink and led in procession through the various departments of the firm. Traffic has been halted in Fleet Street while the banging

out procession has passed across from one side of the road to the other to visit a detached unit of the firm. In each department he visits the newly qualified man has to promise to provide beer money so that his new dignity may be properly celebrated. Apart from the apprentice whose time was out, any new workman starting in a shop would be expected to 'pay his footing' and give something to the other workmen to celebrate (or compensate for?) his arrival.

The birth of a child is another occasion for convivial celebration traditionally known as 'wetting the baby's head', the father of course standing treat for his workmates. The presentation of a gold watch on retirement is now so well established a usage as to merit the name of a tradition but a century or more ago it was often only the master or his son who would have a watch and the worker who brought one might have it confiscated or even be dismissed because he knew 'too much about the science of horology'. In other words hours were to be as long or as short as the employer chose them to be. Small wonder then that the watch proudly displayed and ostentatiously consulted became the symbol of the independent man. The clock as a cheap and common object is the perfect symbol of the greatest change brought about by the industrial revolution—working regular hours to a mechanically regulated rhythm; the clockmaker slowly differentiated himself from the blacksmith, clocking in was invented by Wedgewood and clocking out became a slang term for dying. The sudden stopping of a clock is a well known death omen and clocks used to be stopped at the time of death. Being a typical product of modern industry is no bar to finding a place in folklore. The instinct to seek meaning and to find symbolism in everything is too strong.

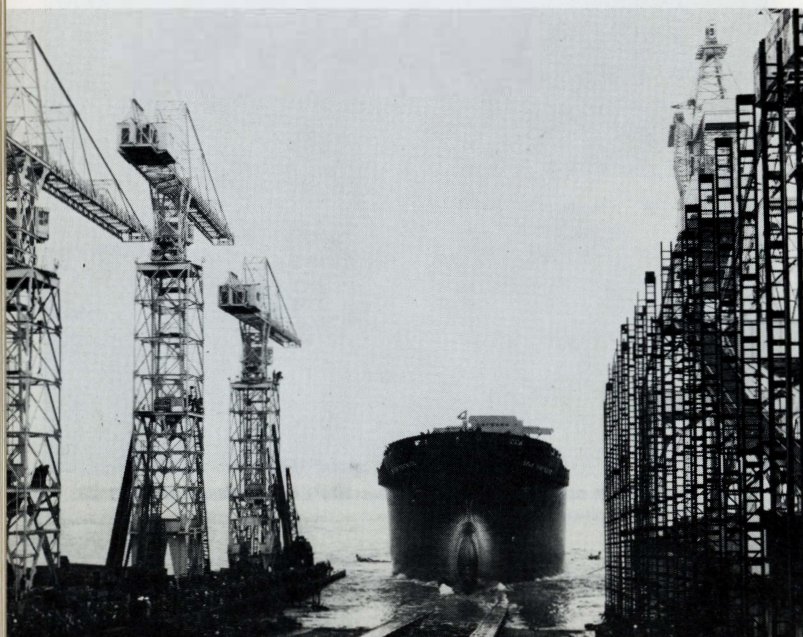
Women workers often leave a factory when they marry and in London at least they mark the occasion with a curious custom. On her last day at work the girl to be married is ritually decorated in mock finery—paper flowers and streamers for example—and is expected to go home still in this festooned condition clutching the many gifts her workmates will have given her. This custom seems to be most popular in the trades using paper or in garment workrooms. Another wedding custom has been recorded in workrooms where embroideresses make wedding veils to order. One of the girls would take a long hair and work it in with the embroidery silk. If it broke early the new bride would die before her husband, if late, the husband would die first. If the hair went right through without breaking at all a long and successful marriage was predicted. Tailors are said to be identifiable as Jewish or Christian from the way they sew on buttons. Jewish tailors are said never to cross their threads but always to

Brunel's 'Great Eastern' was considered a 'hoodo' ship and said to contain the ghosts of a riveter and his boy, thought to have been accidentally sealed in the hull.

The 'crossing the line' ceremony aboard a P & O passenger liner . . .

. . . in which the crew pretend to shave the candidates and then duck them in a tub of water.

The launching of M.V. 'Star Pinewood' merchant ship at the Cammell Laird shipyard in Birkenhead.



Cutting the first turf with an earth-moving machine, Dame Anne Bryans, D.B.E., Chairman of the Board of Governors of the Royal Free Hospital, Hampstead, inaugurates work by Taylor Woodrow Construction Limited on the new site.

The Bishop of Chelmsford lays the foundation stone at the new Church of England School, Barking.

The topping-out ceremony at Myton's development at Churchill Square, Brighton.

PHOTO CALL

The Mayor of Barking, Ald. Ted Ball tops-out a new tower office block in the town.

FROM THE JOHN GORMAN COLLECTION

A Trades Union banner of the period 1910-1925.

The Easter Coconut Dancers at Bacup in Lancashire wear turbans and hats, with wooden 'nuts' at their waists and on their palms and knees.

BRIAN SHUEL

Left and right, the 'banging-out' ceremony which the apprentice printer becomes a fully fledged member of the trade.

PHOTOCALL FEATURES

I AM JUST
A NATIVE

'Trussing the Cooper' at Mortlake Brewery in 1934 where the apprentice cooper is lowered into a burning barrel. Below, another cooper passes-out at Watney's Stag Brewery at Pimlico.

R. D. BARRETT-LENNARD

Easter Pace Egging in the West Riding, where the players are rewarded with eggs or money.

A 'lucky sweep'—traditional bearer of good fortune—attends a Buckinghamshire wedding.

MAURICE COUSINS

The watermen of the Thames race annually from London Bridge to Chelsea for Doggett's Coat and Badge.

The country shoeing smith was the focus of much strange belief, and the water in which he cooled the iron was reputed to have medicinal qualities.

BRITISH RAIL—SCOTTISH REGION

It is becoming customary to throw pennies from the train when one crosses the Forth Bridge—a modern development of old superstitions.

This 'blessing the crops' ceremony took place between the wars at Whitwell when the colliery was blessed.

arrange two loops in parallel. Christians will normally cross them. In the old days tailors, weavers and millers, all trades working on material supplied by the customer, were regarded as likely to be dishonest. The weaver and the miller now have little dealing with the general public and the tailor's reputation is a different one. 'Nine tailors make a man' goes the saying, for the tailor, whatever his personal merits may be, does not follow one of the heroic trades. (There is, however, a completely different explanation of this saying, giving its true version as 'Nine *tellers* make a man' and relating to the nine tollings of the funeral bell when a man died, the deaths of women and children being marked with a lesser number.)

Shoemakers, as well as having a certain reputation for both learning and scepticism, also had some curious trade customs. One of these was that on the first Monday in March they ceased to work by candlelight. The ceremony was known as 'wetting the block'. The oldest hand in the workshop solemnly doused the candles in ale and the rest of the evening was spent in drinking. "A very drunken usage" complained a chronicler.

PRINTERS AND MACHINERY

In western Europe printing has nearly five hundred years of history behind it and it is not surprising that this closely organised craft of highly skilled men has much distinctive lore. (We have already noted the 'banging out' of apprentices.) A certain Johann Fust or Faust was a moneylender who in about 1450 formed a partnership with the pioneer printer Gutenburg and in fact later seized Gutenburg's machinery in default of certain payments due to him. Printing (as with all early machine processes) was regarded with considerable suspicion and this (financial) Faust was associated with his namesake of dramatic and operatic fame who sold his soul to the devil. It has been suggested that this misconception had something to do with the nickname of devils given to the inky boys who assisted the qualified printers, in their 'black art', but the term is also in use among lawyers where an assistant barrister might be described as 'devilling' for a better known principal. Another even more dubious suggestion links the term with a black slave boy belonging to Aldo Manuzio the Venetian printer and considered to be his 'imp'. Whatever the truth of all this printers soon discovered a more troublesome imp in the Druckfehlerteufel, "the imp who puts in the misprints", surely a relation of our own gremlins.

The lodges of the printers' union are known as chapels

and the chairman as father of the chapel. Tradition links this with the fact that Caxton first set up his press in a chapel of Westminster Abbey. This however does not seem to be the true origin of the name, for the term chapel used in this same sense was also known in France where the story of Caxton is of little import. The chapel was a tightly organised society and any breach of its regulations was the subject of a general discussion around the imposing stone and led to the inflicting of some forfeit or penalty by order of the 'father'. All newcomers to the shop paid 2s. 6d. as entrance money or *benvenue*. A workman who had left and then returned only paid half this. On marriage the bridegroom paid the chapel another 2s. 6d. If his wife came to the printing shop she paid 6d., but all the journeymen also paid twopence each, the whole being for a 'welcome drink'. When a son was born, a shilling was paid for appropriate festivities, but only sixpence for a daughter. The apprentice paid 2s. 6d. to celebrate his binding and again—as we have seen—to celebrate the end of his indentures. There were fines for swearing, fighting and drunkeness and also for the neglect of good workmanship. In extreme cases an offender was held down over the correcting stone and beaten eleven times with a board.

The chapel sometimes had a ghost, or so the famous American Benjamin Franklin found when he came to work in a London printing shop. Because he did not stick to all the rules and conventions of the London trade, his work was often spoiled and his type mixed up; all of which was conveniently ascribed by his fellow workmen to the chapel ghost. Exactly a century later a similar experience befell William Lovett who later found fame as a leader of the Chartist movement. He had come up to London from Cornwall and was working as a cabinet maker. When his mates found that he had not been properly apprenticed they talked of 'setting Mother Shorney at him' but Lovett convened a shop meeting by banging on his holdfast, the metal clamp used to keep work in position, explained his circumstances to them and was allowed to continue unmolested. Accounts we have from late Victorian workshops still talk of the holdfast being banged to convene a shop meeting or 'court' to settle disputes between workmen. The punishment for an offence against the men's own discipline was usually being 'sent to Coventry' for a period. All this sort of thing however would seem to have been absorbed by the activity of the shop steward and the informal union meeting.

Although the chapel ghost and Mother Shorney must have been formidable enough in their restricted way, they pale into complete insignificance besides that greatest of all figures in industrial folklore—Ned Ludd, who gave his name to a major

social movement and a new word, albeit a regularly misused one, to the language. The word Luddism or Luddite is often used to mean a blind and ignorant opposition to technical progress. Perhaps we need a word for such an attitude but if historical accuracy is worthy of any respect at all the word should not be Luddism for that movement was far more sophisticated and significant. Of course the introduction of machinery, even without going so far as the fully developed factory system, was a major upheaval in the lives of working people. The new machines were treated with suspicion and as with Arkwright's at Chorley were sometimes destroyed by rioters. The real Luddite movement however arose and found its name among the framework knitters of Nottinghamshire. Here the introduction of machinery was synonymous with the production of shoddy work that threatened to destroy the good name of the entire trade and it was here that machine breaking took the name of Luddism from a probably legendary apprentice knitter, Ned Ludd who, when whipped by order of a magistrate, had smashed up his frame with a hammer. A formidable underground movement evolved which could put into the field substantial forces of armed men. Disguises were worn, sometimes the voluminous dresses and enveloping bonnets of wives or sisters were put on as disguise enough. Warning letters were sent from 'Ned Ludd', 'General Ludd' or even 'General Ludd's wives'. Pass words and secret signs were used. So formidable did the Ludding movement become that in 1808 more men were retained in the Midlands on anti-Luddite duty than were sent to the Peninsula to fight the French! It is interesting to notice that although Sherwood Forest was a centre of disturbance and often given as an 'address' by writers of Ludd letters no attempt was made to evoke the old Robin Hood traditions. These were now dead beyond recall, as much story book material as they are today whereas the new figure of General Ludd was something in deadly earnest. However, this near revolution lost its momentum and the Ludding days were over. Not till late in the nineteenth century was it really safe to let it be known that you knew something of the movement. Local historians in the Midlands and the North began to collect memories of those days and a distinguished scholar, E. P. Thompson has used this material to put the movement into a juster perspective. It may well be that local newspapers, pamphlets and biographies from the industrial areas will be found to contain still more valuable information about this first protest movement of the industrial age which fought proudly under the banner of a man who never was—Ned Ludd of Nottingham.

It was the textile industry that bore the full brunt of the

changeover to factory production and the collapse of the old industry in the West Country and East Anglia is clearly indicated by the dying out of the once famous Bishop Blaise pageant. Saint Blaise was a bishop in Asia Minor, martyred in 316 and subsequently adopted as the patron of the woollen industry. He is said to have been tortured with iron instruments reminiscent of wool combs or, far less credibly, to have pioneered the art of wool combing, a process essential in the preparation of the fleece for spinning and weaving. St. Blaise's Day was February 3rd, and in the wool towns was marked by elaborately costumed parades celebrating the glories of the wool industry and representing any historical or mythological characters who were in the remotest way connected with it. Such processions were major events at Colchester, Coggeshall, Norwich, Northampton, Bury St. Edmunds, Hadleigh, Guildford, Bradford and York and were also known in other places. Typical processions would comprise bands and banners, Jason and Medea from the classical story of the Golden Fleece and perhaps other Argonauts as well, often mounted and always splendidly dressed. Next might come King Henry II and characters representing Flemings, shepherds and shepherdesses, sheep-shearers, woolsorters, combmakers, loom builders, dyers, merchants and their apprentices, Bishop Blaise himself with his chaplain, Jack of Newbury the great Tudor clothier and symbolic figures representing Peace and Plenty. There might be as many as eight hundred people in these processions. Speeches were of course made and a traditional song sung.

My friends, the day of Bishop Blaise is here,
The joyful'st day we have in all the year,
Wherein all tradesmen may rejoice and sing—
From a woolcomber to the greatest king.

When first the art of combing-it was found
By Bishop Blaise—through England it did sound
And therefore he shall canonised be,
Amongst the Saints to all eternity.

Ten thousand spinners, and twice ten thousand too,
By our brave art have daily work to do;
Who from their wheels send forth such pleasant noise
In honour of we jolly combing boys.

These Blaise pageants seem to have been most widely noted in the 1780's and 1790's when the industry they honoured was entering its years of crisis. As the old textile areas declined it was often cynically remarked the Saint Blaise seemed to have abandoned his devotees. The last celebration in Northampton

was in 1804 and though Bradford was to survive and flourish as a woollen town their last celebration seems to have been in 1825. There was a last half-hearted attempt to revive the custom in Norwich when the saint appeared at the laying of the foundation stone of the new Norwich Yarn Factory in 1836. The new textile industry however, dominated as it was by cotton, Lancashire and steam powered machinery, created new conditions, new traditions of its own. Bishop Blaise is little heard of now and certainly not in connection with industry. He now concentrates on what was once only a sideline. At St. Etheldreda's Church, Ely Place, London, on St. Blaise's Day, a ceremony called the Blessing of the Throat takes place. Tradition says that St. Blaise miraculously saved the life of a boy choking on a fish bone and from that time since sufferers from throat complaints have looked to him for help. Candles are blessed, tied together in the form of a cross and placed on the throats of those who seek the saints blessing on his day. So, in this strange way, in an obscure church, Blaise is still remembered.

UNIONS AND FACTORIES

Even though the early trade unions were quite modest in their aims, often seeking to do no more than maintain the customs of their trade, it was nearly as dangerous to be a trade unionist as a Luddite. As a consequence the early unions were much in the tradition of the Freemasons with closely guarded lodges, rituals to be mastered, even elaborate ceremonial costumes. In the 1840's the Bakers Union of Aberdeen wore pink muslin suits and turbans for their lodge meetings. One of the textile unions had an elaborate initiation ritual involving the use of a sword, a battleaxe, a skeleton, a Bible and surplices. The ceremony, in doggerel verse picked up from a dozen literary as well as popular sources, is at times reminiscent of the traditional mummers' play, at others of modern pantomime verse.

Strangers, within these walls we have admitted you,
Hoping you will prove honest, faithful, just and true,
If you cannot keep the secrets we require,
Go hence, you are at liberty to retire.

Or again;

Stand, ye presumptuous mortals, strangers' steps I hear,
And I must know your trade and business here.
By my great power, there's nothing can from vengeance stay us,
If you come here intending to betray us.

was in some sense the direct ancestor of the clockmaker and of the engineer, those typical men of the age of machines, but the miller himself remained like the blacksmith, very much a traditional figure. It was a little known custom of millers, on St. Martin's Eve (November 10th), to kill a cockerel and sprinkle its blood onto the machinery. There would then be a family festivity. The custom was known as 'blooding the mill' and was probably quite obsolete by the middle of the nineteenth century. It is very probable that the most primitive launching ceremony was of this nature, with champagne featuring as a substitute for the primitive sacrificial blood. It is most unlikely that anyone ever 'blooded' factory machinery but it is not impossible and stranger things have certainly been known.

Another interesting case of *non*-survival is that of the rural witches or wisemen who were supposed to be able to stop horses in their tracks and prevent the wheels of carts from turning. George Pickingale of Canewdon (Essex), who died in 1909 is even credited with having stopped farm machinery 'by the power of his eyes'. Even bicycles are mentioned as subject to the power of the Canewdon wizard but there seem to be no stories of such powers exercised over factory or workshop machinery. There are stories of jinxed or hoodoo machines in factories but one does not (as yet) hear of individuals being held responsible for their unaccountable failure. In the world of aircraft and rocketry, gremlins are used as the explanation of unexpected or inexplicable failures but the usage is more a convenient shorthand or a piece of semi-humour than anything that can be classed as established folklore. The gremlin however, is still young, being born during the Second World War in the Royal Air Force. How far it was then a mere piece of humour is difficult to say, or how far the belief was a genuine reflection of the great physical and mental strain of wartime air sorties, for these are the conditions in which the weird explanation often seems the most acceptable. Apart from their mechancial habitat the gremlins have something in common with those elves of the Cornish mines, the buccas and knockers.

One genuine piece of industrial folklore which appeared during the Second World War is the recurring belief that working with certain machinery could cause sterility and the American writer Bergen Evans has reported that this belief, with reference in this case to welding apparatus, caused serious absenteeism among women workers. The fear of sterility or impotence is a deep rooted one which persistently outcrops in this way. Service in high flying aircraft is also rumoured to cause sterility. As well as producing this new belief of their own, air crews have taken over some beliefs from the world of ships, for example they too

feel it is inauspicious to have clergy or nuns among the passengers!

It is the great occasion which tends to attract to itself the traditions of a community and to give a public display of customs that might easily have been forgotten by the mass of onlookers, if indeed they ever knew them. A good example of this occurred when the Minister of Transport opened a new section of road, part of the approaches to the rebuilt Blackwall Tunnel, East London. The Minister was given silver scissors with which to cut a ribbon. In return for them he paid one penny. Doubtless both scissors and penny will be retained as souvenirs of the occasion and the old belief that one should never give a knife or scissors, but always 'sell' them 'to avoid cutting the friendship' has been given a new lease of life.

Perhaps the greatest 'traditional' occasion in the industrial world will be a royal visit when it is demonstrated time and time again that monarchy has not lost its ancient aura of magic. 'Royal weather' is still talked of, the belief that the sun will always appear, however briefly, whenever the monarch appears in public. The chosen few selected to briefly touch hands with the Queen have sometimes been pressed to shake hands with as many as possible of their fellow workers. It is known as 'sharing the royal handshake'.

The British industrial scene is perhaps deficient in folklore when compared with for example the ancient metal mining areas of Germany where traditions told of miners guided to profitable lodes by Saint Barbara or even by the Prophet Daniel. Here it is Roman Catholicism that has actively maintained much saint lore now lost in Britain. But even in the nominally Protestant and virtually secular Britain there has been in recent years an astonishing rise the wearing of Christopher medals. (One even accompanied the Apollo astronauts.) At the other extreme the American oil industry, however modern its image and atmosphere may be, has generated enough folklore to justify a book on the subject. Oil it would seem was prospected for as much by dreamers and diviners as by sober geologists. Perhaps the American tradition of individual enterprise and pioneering kept going the older traditions of magical treasure seeking methods. But again there is little enough of this sort of thing in Britain. Nevertheless we may safely say that the British workshop, shipyard or factory is for the careful observer just as profitable a place to seek for folklore as the age old rural community.

THE INDUSTRIAL COMMUNITY

In the earlier parts of this book interest was focused on the lore and customs of particular trades and industries. In the following sections the angle of approach is different and we shall consider the folklore that still survives in industrial districts. In view of the radical social change that these areas have experienced since the industrial revolution of the eighteenth century, the general 'out-door' survivals are perhaps even more remarkable. In the North East, in Durham and Hartlepool for example, the year begins with the First Footing custom. A luck bringer, preferably a dark haired man, must be the first over the threshold in the new year. Properly, he should bring the traditional symbolic gifts of salt, coal and perhaps whisky. Once inside he may well be invited to cut the First Footing cake, which should be a round one. Anything other than a clean cut is a dreadful omen. First Footing, whether an elaborate luck bringing visit or a simple routine call by the same neighbour every year, is considered to be extremely important, so important that a suitable person is sometimes paid to carry out the rite. One has heard of an old lady trapped in her cottage, unable even to visit the outside lavatory because she had not been first footed. A timely visit by the newspaper boy saved a difficult situation. Even in the South there is a deep seated feeling that one ought to 'see the New Year in' though actual first footing is little known. Perhaps this instinct was formed by the old belief that whatever one was doing when the bells rang the New Year in (though in the ports ships' sirens are more likely than bells) would be one's principal occupation for the coming year. It was prudent therefore, as well as enjoyable, to be merrymaking when the New Year was born. Certainly one should not be in bed! It is interesting to note that the 'first foot', however dark must neither squint, not be flatfooted. Eyebrows that met were another ill omened disqualification. Sometimes the first foot is known as a 'Lucky Bird' but this name is not so common. The New Year has a great many customs, superstitions and omens connected with it but few of them are still found in an industrial setting. It is an odd and arresting fact that one of our most ancient traditions, that of the Sword Dance, has survived most vigorously in an industrial environment. The Long Sword dance, which has parallels in Central Europe involves six or eight men, each with swords perhaps a yard long which they clash together as they dance, or interweave into a pattern commonly called 'the lock' which enables one dancer to lift all the swords into the air together. The dance

is half involved with a strange ritual—one can hardly call it a play—of killing and resurrection. The Long Sword dance was found in active life near Sheffield, at Grenoside and Handsworth, and in the North of Yorkshire, in the iron mining districts of Cleveland. The Short Sword or Rapper dance is associated with Tyneside, and especially with the coal miners of that area. In this type of performance the 'swords' are short and flexible with handles at each end and their use by a smaller team (of five plus two 'characters') makes possible a swifter and more intricate performance than can be achieved with the Long Sword. The Rapper type dance of the North East seems to be peculiar to its home territory. The Long Sword dance, as we have remarked, is one of a European family. In Lancashire and Cheshire the Morris dancers reflect their urban, industrial environment by wearing clogs and carrying, instead of the sticks or handkerchieves of the Southern English dancers, hanks of untwisted cotton rope called slings. The Royton (Lancs.) dancers work in a team of ten, often cotton spinners, plus a leader and a group of musicians.

There can I think be no doubt that the strangest of these folklore survivals into the industrial world is to be found in the Easter Coconut dancers of Bacup (Lancs.). Here the dancers led by a man with a whip go in single file through the streets. They are blackfaced and wear turbans and strange 'skirts' with wooden 'nuts' at the waist. They have similar 'nuts' on their palms and knees and clack them together as they jump and dance, their clogs rattling on the cobblestones as they go. These Britannia Coconut Dancers are said, improbably, to have been founded no earlier than 1857, indeed so grotesque are they that their very genuineness as traditional dancers has been doubted, but, as Miss Violet Alford has pointed out, a similar dance is to be found in Provence in Southern France and the whole atmosphere and style of the thing suggest great antiquity. If the dancers of 1907 were merely celebrating the 'Jubilee' of the establishment of their particular team then of course the problem disappears. But, whichever answer we give to the question of their origin, the Bacup 'Nutters' remain a remarkable monument to the toughness and survival power of the traditional dance in an industrial environment.

The Bacup dancers traditionally appear at Easter and the same season shows us yet another example of folklore vigorously surviving against the most industrial of backgrounds. One of our most interesting and astonishing customs is that generally called the 'Mummers' Play'. We have in fact already alluded to it as connected with sword dancing. This Mummers' Play is a luck bringing ritual usually (though, as we shall see, not always) performed near Christmas. There are two main versions, one

focused around a killing and resurrection, the other around a comic wooing. These plays have attracted so many secondary features—subsidiary characters, multiplied combats and much (literal) horse play—that when all obvious additions are stripped away little remains but a simple symbolic mime. Although it is now played as sheer light entertainment or just for tradition's sake, its ritual, even religious, character was recognised not only by scholars but also by some of the players themselves. 'This 'ere Mumming', an old man once said, 'is more like parsons' work'. The play of course is a study in itself and has a considerable literature about it as well as continuing to entertain and impress new generations of watchers.

One area of its active survival is Halifax (Yorks.) in the Calder valley. Here in West Riding Mummers are Pace Eggers because the play is given at Easter—the Paschal season—and the players were either rewarded with eggs or the money with which to buy them. (In Cheshire, the play was given in November and linked with the Soul Cake custom.) How old these plays are we can hardly begin to guess, for written records are few and far between. The Midgley (Halifax) play is unusual in having an early (though by no means the earliest) version in print. A pamphlet including the play was printed in 1840 under the name of *The Peace Egg* and this must have introduced it to a wider audience for normally these plays are handed on by word of mouth among the players as a jealously guarded tradition. As a genuine folk rite the Midgley play survived until the First World War when its regular performance was interrupted. Some of those, however, who had last performed it as boys performed it again as men for broadcasts in 1931 and 1932. Some years later again the tradition was revived again in local schools and is now thoroughly re-established. The enthusiasm at Midgley was imitated elsewhere. The play at Brighouse (lapsed since the 1880's) was revived as was a version at Heptonstall. In more than one way the Midgley play is a link with the community's past. A wooden sword once used in the play and still on view dates back to the 1780's. A sword wielded at Waterloo once played its part too. The pace egger's essential costume is a bizarre headpiece or 'helmet' decorated with tissue paper flowers and bells. Anyone in the district who is visibly overdressed might still be described as 'Donned like a pace egger'. At noon on Good Friday performances abruptly cease—a small touch perhaps but one which once again shows the Pace Egg play to be something more than mere entertainment or fund-raising. It is a strange reflowering of tradition in the smoky soil of the industrial twentieth century.

The North West also has its Whit Walks, interesting to the folklorist because they have become a genuinely popular custom

and yet only having appeared about a hundred and fifty years ago in the heart of industrial Britain. The old village clubs and Friendly Societies would often walk in procession at Whitsuntide and the Church had its Rogation Days when the bounds of the parish were solemnly walked to impress the landmarks on the memories of the rising generation, but the Whit Walks of, for example, Manchester are something rather different. To start with they are on a vastly greater scale. A Manchester Whit Walk might have between ten and twenty thousand participants. The procession itself will begin with the tiniest children, in white and with flowers. Older children might help in carrying banners though the largest of these will require the strength of the men. It is above all a sentimental, pretty occasion, a time for family reunions, bridging the generations and of course, often a time of heavy drinking. The Bibles and the text banners, and for Catholics the holy statues, mix a little oddly with Rose Queens and similar fringe characters. The atmosphere is a holiday one, new clothes are obligatory for the day and one can only wonder at the grip of such a relatively new custom (the Church of England Walk seems to be no older than 1800) that even in hard times demanded much lavish expenditure on its celebration. At least, a cynic once observed, it ensured that the children got new clothes once a year! The Whit Walks however, are happy social occasions that are a real part of the life of the communities that celebrate them. There is an interesting comparison here with Harvest Festivals. Traditionally the success of the harvest with all that meant for an agricultural community was celebrated with a thoroughly secular feast called the Horkey. It was not until the 1840's—as the lives of most people were gradually becoming divorced from farming—that the church Harvest Festival as we know it today began to make its appearance. Now it is thoroughly established as a popular institution and with the ancient celebrations of Christmas and Easter is one of the occasions that attract significantly larger numbers of people than usual to the churches. No doubt the age of nuclear power and plastics will also generate new institutions and customs in the same way as the age of steam and steel. We should never forget that the 'traditional' Christmas we celebrate now contains many elements (not excluding Santa Claus) which are really little more than a century old!

The folklore we find surviving in today's industrial areas is of two basic kinds; survival and new growth. Viking ships are no longer seen on the Mersey yet Liverpool mothers still warn their children to keep clear of the river bank in case Jinny Greenteeth —a Scandinavian sounding name for a demon if ever there was one—should drag them in. In London it is still sometimes possible to see on July 25th, children making 'grottoes' strange

little structures which should include at least one or two shells—a last memorial of St. James of Compostella the saint whose symbol was a scallop shell. These are clear examples of survival from earlier times. 'New growth' on the other hand shows the folklore instinct at work on completely new materials. There are for example, many traditional cures for whooping cough. The youngest of these involve taking the sick child to a lime kiln or a gas works. Sometimes the gasometers themselves are mentioned as the place where a cure may be sought. Tarred roads are, historically speaking, a recent phenomenon but it is a very well established folk belief that it is beneficial to breathe the smell of boiling tar, to place a well tarred wooden road block near a child's cot or even to chew a piece of tar. The common use of coal is hardly two centuries old yet it is a well established belief that carrying a small piece of coal will ensure luck. With the spreading use of coal came the smoke problem and the trade of chimney sweep. Sweeps are now traditional luck bringers, especially at weddings, though they must be in their working clothes and be coming towards the bride when seen. There seems to be some suggestion that belief in the 'lucky sweep' is especially associated with London. Here then are clear examples of superstitions attaching themselves to new, urban and industrial things. A third category of folklore might be made of 'transfers' in which a belief about an old thing is transferred to some modern equivalent as from a cradle to a pram or in the case of the belief that clerical passengers bring bad weather, from ships to aeroplanes. It is an old belief that to put shoes on the table will bring bad luck. It is a modern, urban variant that the bad luck in question will be unemployment. It is easy to believe that the slump of the thirties must have left its mark on the public mind and wherever disaster is likely to strike, people of a certain cast of mind will think of the omens and bad luck signs that foretold its coming. The widespread and very deeply held folk-belief that it is not merely wasteful but positively wicked to burn bread (in folklore burning is always considered the ultimate destruction) was surely formed during generations of poverty when the smallest piece of bread could mean for someone the difference between life and death. The saying 'Clogs to clogs in three generations' is a folk comment on the rapid rise and fall of certain families in the great economic lottery called the Industrial Revolution. Any community that is a community and has gone through grim experiences will often draw together against real or imagined threats to their welfare from outside and assert its identity by references (not always appreciated by the stranger) to its local traditions. Such a case occurred in 1960 when striking Hartlepool seamen demonstrated against Sir

Thomas Yates the secretary of the Seamen's Union. They displayed a toy monkey labelled 'Yates' hanging on a string with the accompanying slogan 'We hanged the wrong monkey!' a joking allusion to the old story told against Hartlepool people, that having found a monkey in some wreckage on the beach after a great storm, they 'hanged it for a Frenchman'.

DISCOVERING FOLKLORE IN INDUSTRY

The fascination of folklore as a field of study owes much to the fact that anyone and everyone can be a collector and make valuable contributions to this ever expanding area of knowledge. You may begin immediately at home, at school, on holiday, at your place of work, anywhere indeed where people come together whether for work or play. One will of course be a better collector of folklore with some training and experience but even an absolute beginner with some intelligence can do good work if certain simple rules are followed. Rule number one is to be a good observer and listener and to make your notes in private afterwards. Many people dislike being objects of curiosity, however scientific your motives may be—and may well take offence if your interest is too obvious. Rule number two is never to ask people, "Do you have any peculiar customs/superstitions here?" As I remarked earlier in this work the truly traditional belief is usually taken for granted by those who hold it and often not even thought worthy of mention. One must learn to ask the question that effectively brings out the information one wants. The best way to do this is often to give some information and hope for a return with interest. One might sum up this simple advice by saying that the more you belong to the group you are studying, the less conspicuous you are, the greater will be your chances of learning about the intimate beliefs and habits of your subjects. The good collector of folklore must to some extent at least be accepted as 'one of the tribe'. There are few books that will help you to discover folklore in industry. It is a field that has been very little studied though incidental information can be found in books on related topics—local histories, the histories of industries or of trade unions or the autobiographies of working class people. Get to know the old people of your community, ask them about 'the old days', you will learn many interesting and astounding things that will increase your understanding of our own day and age. On the other hand you must beware of the joker and the lover of a good story. The too earnest enquirer has very often been taken in!

Keep your findings on cards rather than in a notebook. Note down who gave you a particular piece of information, his age and occupation. Ask too where and when he or she actually saw or did the thing in question. Always be as exact as possible. Collect cuttings from newspapers and magazines, always taking care to note the date, etc. An undated, unidentified cutting is of little use. Easy things to investigate are good and bad luck beliefs, the sort of customs we have talked about in connection with apprentices, jokes and sayings about various trades and tradesmen. Read what ever has been written on your particular interest. Write to your local paper. In due course you might feel like attempting a short article on your findings. The writer of this book would welcome any supplementary information from readers. As compared to the home or to the general life of the countryside, industry is not an easy field for the collection of folklore but, now the search is on, new material is constantly being found. Most of our folklore developed in the rural world of long ago but in Britain at least, for the last two centuries most people have lived in an increasingly industrial environment. Inevitably this has coloured our whole outlook. Strange things have already been recorded, strange that is to the traditionalist but, from another point of view, perfectly understandable. For example, a Hampshire mother recently had her baby baptised in the factory at which she is employed. She wanted the service held in a familiar place, among her friends and workmates. The search for folklore in the world of industry reveals many such fascinating blends of the old and the new. Folklore is an important and valuable study because it helps us to understand our fellow human beings and as the poet has said, "The proper study of mankind is man."

I wish you luck in your own researches.

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